

**YUKON GOVERNMENT POSITION
ON
KLUANE NATIONAL PARK
(RESERVE)**

**in response to
Kluane National Park
Management Plan review
1989**

Yukon Government Position on Kluane National Park (Reserve)

INTRODUCTION

The Kluane National Park Reserve was officially established in 1976. Shortly afterwards, the Canadian Parks Service began developing a plan for managing the park. The Kluane National Park (Reserve) Management Plan was approved by the federal Minister of the Environment in 1980. Last year the Parks Service began a regular public review of the 1980 management plan to see if revisions were necessary. A revised plan will be submitted to the federal Minister for approval later this year.

Throughout this review, the Government of the Yukon has worked with the Canadian Parks Service to refine Kluane's management objectives. Management of the Park is the responsibility of the federal government. The Yukon Government has developed a formal position, outlined in this paper, for the future of Kluane National Park.

PHILOSOPHY

The Kluane National Park Reserve is rich in spectacular mountains, wild rivers, glaciers, and diverse varieties of plants and animals. It is a wilderness environment, and the purpose for designating it as a park reserve is to protect its wilderness.

The wilderness of Kluane also provides the opportunity for increased economic benefits to the Yukon. The Government of the Yukon believes these economic opportunities can be realized while maintaining the wilderness quality of the park.

The government has endorsed the principle of sustainable development in the Yukon Economic Strategy. It is committed to economic development that protects the environment and conserves our resources to ensure these resources are available for the use and enjoyment of future generations. In the case of Kluane Park, the wilderness is the resource.

The Yukon Conservation Strategy, to be released later this year, will provide a broad plan for the sustainable development of the Yukon's natural, cultural, and heritage resources. It will further emphasize that the development of our tourist and renewable resource industries depends on a healthy environment and a healthy resource base.

The Yukon Tourism Action Plan and the Kluane Tourism Development Plan point to the potential to significantly improve the tourist economy in the southwestern Yukon through greater emphasis on the entire region as a prime destination for tourists. These plans also recognize that long-term economic benefits are linked to the conservation of resources.

These strategies and plans, developed in consultation with Yukoners, have shaped the Yukon government's position on the future of Kluane National Park. We can diversify and strengthen the economy of the Kluane region by using its natural advantages and by protecting these advantages so they can continue to provide economic benefits over the long term.

BENEFITS

Kluane National Park is a critical, but underplayed, drawing card for the Yukon. About 130,000 visitors travel the Alaska Highway along the park boundary each year. The bulk of these visitors, however, are simply passing through the Yukon en route to or from Alaska. Their stay in the territory is short and their expenditures relatively low. In contrast, the small percentage of visitors for whom Kluane is the main destination accounts for about 20 per cent of the revenues raised from non-resident tourism in the region.

The Kluane Tourism Development Plan is aimed at achieving a more balanced market by enhancing the area as a tourist destination while continuing to serve highway travellers. Through the development of increased interpretive programs and services and improved access to the region, more tourists will be attracted to Kluane National Park and the surrounding area for longer periods of time.

Significant economic benefits can result from this approach. It is expected that implementation of this plan (over the next 5 years) could result in a net increase of \$5 million in tourist expenditures by 1993. The estimated increase in the same period without implementation of the plan is \$1.7 million.

The development of tourist and related services and programs in the Kluane region provides an opportunity for the public and private sector to work to build a vibrant regional economy. With the direction provided by the Yukon Economic Strategy, the government will continue to encourage and promote the involvement and participation of local industry and businesses in development opportunities.

The building of a sustainable economy can also support community and social development in the Kluane region. The creation of a mechanism to provide for communication and cooperation among government agencies, communities, Indian bands, and residents will assist in achieving community development and social goals in the region.

In developing the region as a tourist destination, the importance of its wilderness can not be underestimated. The two primary reasons visitors travel to the Yukon is to experience our wilderness and to view wildlife in their natural habitat. The conservation of our wilderness and its resources will ensure a long-term tourist economy in the Kluane region.

While the wilderness of Kluane National Park and the surrounding region is central to our visitors' experience, it is equally important to the Yukoners who live here. It defines the character of the area and shapes our lives. The protection of this wilderness character will preserve the quality and style of life that have drawn many to choose Kluane as their home.

Through its review of the management objectives for Kluane National Park, the Yukon government has renewed its commitment to the conservation and development of our natural and heritage resources to meet our economic, social and cultural goals. In partnership with the Canadian Parks Service, communities, businesses, and residents of the Kluane region, it will promote improvements in our opportunities to enjoy the historic and natural riches of Kluane and to share this wealth with visitors from around the world.

POSITIONS

A Regional Approach

1. The Yukon government supports a regional approach that preserves and protects the wilderness integrity of Kluane National Park and encourages the development of tourist and other services in the Kluane area.

The Yukon government supports the establishment of a regional structure that includes representation from the communities, Indian bands, residents, the private sector and government agencies to provide a coordinated and cooperative approach to planning, management and development needs in the Kluane area.

The Yukon government supports the continued preservation and protection of the wilderness integrity of Kluane National Park and the protection of its unique natural, historic and cultural features. In other words, it supports the reasons the park was created. It also will encourage the development of tourist and other services and facilities in the Kluane region.

The government believes these objectives can be achieved by viewing the Kluane area as a region. In other places, this approach has been undertaken by establishing a specially designated area known as a "biosphere reserve," which includes a park or protected area at its centre surrounded by an area in which development activities are permitted. Biosphere reserves are being promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as part of its Man and the Biosphere Program as a means of encouraging sustainable development, local involvement in

conservation and development activities, education and training in resource management and community development.

As part of a regional approach, a simple method for coordination is needed to achieve a greater degree of communication and cooperation among the communities, Indian bands, residents, private sector, and government agencies in the Kluane region. The regional planning commission for the Kluane Land Use Plan is, for example, now providing a means for local residents to have a formative role in determining the area's future. There is, however, need to provide for on-going communication related to planning, management and development.

The biosphere reserve model is now being successfully used in the Waterton Lakes and Glacier National Parks in southern Alberta and northern Montana. Parks officials, government agencies, industry, and local residents are involved in a regional committee that oversees activities in a "zone of cooperation" around the park. The group coordinates and advises on research activities, planning needs, economic development opportunities, and technical park management issues.

The Yukon government supports further examination, with the Canadian Parks Services, of this model and the establishment of a biosphere reserve in the Kluane region.

Regional Planning

2. The Yukon government urges the Canadian Parks Service to support the Kluane Land Use Planning program and assist with the coordination of park-related proposals and regional tourism development proposals that will be incorporated in the Kluane Land Use Plan.

The Kluane Land Use Plan, which is being developed as part of the Yukon Land Use planning process, is a principal method for determining the long-term future of the region's resources. It provides an opportunity for an integrated approach to the allocation of land use and resources in the region. It is important that government agencies cooperate with each other on long-range regional planning. This process provides local residents and groups outside of government with the opportunity for effective participation.

Access to the Park

3. The Yukon government supports, subject to the availability of funds, the upgrading of strategically-located, existing roads and trails to provide improved access to the park's boundary.

The Alaska Highway and the Haines Road, to the east of the park, provide some access to the Kluane front ranges, but much of the park boundary is inaccessible. Rough trails and mining roads exist in some areas, particularly within the Kluane Game Sanctuary northeast of the park. Most visitors are, however, unaware of these potential routes and these roads are not currently maintained to a standard that would allow the travelling public to use them.

Minor construction and maintenance of some existing roads and trails to the park's boundary and the installation of proper signs and parking facilities will provide year-round access by hikers, skiers, and other users travelling by horse or dogsled. Eventually some of these routes could be further upgraded to allow for bus tour and recreational vehicle traffic.

The Yukon government supports improved access to the park's boundary in three specific areas:

o Alsek Pass

The existing road should be improved for bus and highway traffic from the Alaska Highway into the Alsek Pass.

Access into the Alsek Pass will provide an opportunity to develop a trailhead area where visitors can park and enjoy interpretive displays and viewpoints or begin a hike or guided horseback trip into the park. Other facilities such as an amphitheatre for campfire talks could be developed to enhance the visitors' experience. This development will require cooperation between the government and the Canadian Parks Service.

o Mush-Bates Alder Creek Road

The Mush-Bates Alder Creek road should be maintained for low-grade, controlled vehicle access.

The Yukon government and the Canadian Parks Service need to investigate the compatibility of improved vehicle access with visitors travelling on foot or by horse.

o Slims River mining road

The Slims River mining road should be maintained for low-grade, controlled vehicle access.

The Yukon government and the Canadian Parks Service need to investigate the compatibility of improved

vehicle access with visitors travelling on foot or by horse.

Access within the Park

4. The Yukon government supports the provision of and improvements to air, water and land access within the park compatible with its wilderness character.

The government does not support the construction of new roads to or in the park or the development of a major loop highway through the park.

The government believes there is room for more and improved access via lake and river systems and through air service into the park. Tour or shuttle boat services on Kathleen or Mush-Bates Lakes and guided commercial operations on the Slims River and the Dezadeash-Alsek River system are options that can be explored. Air access with landings controlled by permit and allowed at designated locations in the icefields would provide visitors controlled opportunities to view the spectacular vistas at the heart of Kluane.

Improved and maintained trails should offer access for a variety of recreational users year round. A system of trails that includes short, easy trails for the disabled and the less physically active, self-guided nature trails, and more rigorous courses for experienced hikers will give more people the opportunity to view and appreciate Kluane's wilderness. Guided hikes and tours by horseback and dogsled could provide greater access within the park and new or expanded business opportunities for Yukoners.

Park Interpretive Programs and Services

5. A. The Yukon government urges the Canadian Parks Service to make a greater commitment to interpretive programs and services, particularly along the highway corridor.

The development and delivery of interpretive programs and services are an essential element of a national park's operations. The Yukon government urges the Canadian Parks Service to devote increased resources to its interpretive programs at Kluane to promote greater understanding and appreciation of the natural, historic, and cultural resources of the region and to enhance the experience of visitors. Specifically it needs to consider expanding the visitor reception facilities and services at the park's headquarters in Haines Junctions.

- B. The Yukon government supports increased cooperation between the federal and territorial agencies and the private sector on the development of interpretive programs and services in the Kluane region.

The Yukon government will work with the Canadian Parks Service and the private sector on interpretive programming. Some cooperative projects are already underway. The Yukon government is, for example, constructing amphitheaters in two of its campgrounds in the Kluane region to provide a facility for evening campfire talks by the park's staff. Similar amphitheatres can be constructed at locations, such as the Alsek Pass. Other opportunities for improved interpretive services are available through the Volunteer Campground Host Program, which is being expanded this summer to include the campgrounds along the boundary of Kluane National Park. The expansion of the park's visitor reception services and facilities in Haines Junction would also complement other reception services offered by the Yukon government at locations, such as Beaver Creek.

- C. The Yukon government is committed to developing improved interpretive programs and services in the Kluane region.

As part of its Kluane Region Tourism Development Plan, the Yukon government will emphasize the development of a broad range of interpretive services and programs aimed at promoting the Kluane region as a tourist destination and providing visitors with a greater appreciation of the natural, historic and cultural wealth of the area.